

# Snowbound Area Of S. C. Declared Disaster By West

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

An emergency of major proportions faced South Carolina officials Monday as thousands of motorists, many of them northerners bound for Florida sunshine, became stranded on snow-blocked highways.

State Civil Defense headquarters in Columbia said 16,718 persons were in armories, churches, schools and other public shelters Monday afternoon. The count did not include several thousand others who found accommodations in motels and private homes.

At least 11 deaths were reported as a direct result of the blizzard Friday and Saturday which spread up to 23 inches of snow over the central and southern parts of the state.

Gov. John West took a helicopter tour of the snowbound Sumter area 40 miles southeast of Columbia and declared it a disaster area. He called an afternoon news conference to announce he is asking President Nixon to declare a 31-county disaster area eligible for federal aid.

At a meeting with Sumter Mayor Richard Moses and other officials, West and his aides were told that food and fuel shortages could develop because of the unwilling and unwanted "tourists." The local officials were assured that National Guard C-rations and fuel supplies would be provided if supplies get short.

Most of those stranded in Sumter were traveling on I-95, a main traffic artery between New York and Florida.

Three exposure deaths were reported in the county, all involving local residents.

The approximately 6,000 persons housed in public shelters in Orangeburg, 40 miles south of Columbia, included 70 danc-

ers and musicians of a National Ballet troupe.

The troupe members were housed in The First Baptist Church, whose members provided breakfast Monday before the group headed for Jacksonville, Fla., in two buses, two trucks and a camper.

They had been scheduled for Charleston, but on being advised they couldn't make it by Monday night, they headed for Florida, their first cancellation in 10 years of extensive trouping.

State Civil Defense headquarters said seven weather-connected deaths had been reported in Orangeburg County, at least two of them due to exposure. A child was killed in Berkeley County when a snow-laden car port collapsed.

The Highway Department hoped to get I-26 opened by late Monday afternoon. The northbound lane of I-95 was open between Florence and the North Carolina line, but the southbound lane remained blocked.

Air Force and National Guard helicopters rescued thousands of the stranded, transporting them to several emer-

gency rescue stations in seven counties.

Bright sunshine Sunday melted some of the heavy snow blanket but record low temperatures Sunday night turned slushy snow into hard ice. Columbia had a low reading of five degrees and temperatures elsewhere were in the low teens.

The slow melting process began again Monday with mostly sunny skies and temperatures in the mid-30s to low 40s. Below freezing temperatures in the 20s were expected again Monday night.

After Gov. West's visit, Sumter city and county officials met and declared a state of emergency effective immediately. No motor vehicles will be allowed on the streets or highways except emergency vehicles and those needed for delivery of medical supplies, fuel and food.

Police were authorized to arrest motorists violating the ban, which will remain in effect until road conditions improve.

Sumter streets were lined with out-of-state cars and the shelters and motels filled with complaining tourists.